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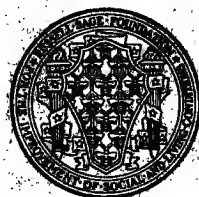
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# FIRST STEPS IN COMMUNITY CENTER DEVELOPMENT

BY  
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RUSSELL SAGE FOUNDATION  
130 EAST TWENTY-SECOND STREET, NEW YORK CITY

Price 10 Cents

3-17-20

Above all else be sure to get the right person to supervise your school centers. They will be a community asset or a community calamity according as they are wisely or unwisely administered. In this work, limiting the expenditure for supervision instead of curtailing on equipment, is the worst kind of economy. Indeed, if a competent supervisor cannot be secured from the outset, it is preferable to delay the undertaking until such time as one can be had.—LEE F. HANMER.

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## PREFATORY NOTE

This pamphlet was prepared to meet the needs of individuals and organizations desirous of promoting the after-class use of school buildings for various kinds of recreational, social and civic purposes. It is based, not upon theory, but upon actual practice as observed and recorded in many localities throughout the country. Much of the material presented herein has been taken from an earlier pamphlet, "How to Start Social Centers" (No. Rec. 125), which is now out of print. This old matter has been thoroughly revised so as to bring it into accord with recent experience and to it has been added all of the constructive part of the leaflet entitled "The Real Snag in Social Center Extension" (No. Rec. 137). A new section upon the planning of school buildings which are intended to serve as community centers has been introduced. The small section on activities contained in "How to Start Social Centers" has been omitted since that subject is now so much more adequately treated in the handbook "Community Center Activities" (see page 32), a publication which is in reality a supplement to this pamphlet.

## First Steps in Community Center Development

### WHAT IS MEANT BY "COMMUNITY CENTER"

This institution is variously known as "social center," "recreation center," "civic center," "evening center" or "neighborhood center." Just now the name "community center," because of its obvious appropriateness, seems to be the one more generally used. But whatever it is called, the thing itself and that which is treated in these pages is the organized use of public school buildings for purposes other than the original one of educating children. Since this utilization always occurs outside of the regular class hours, it has been called the "wider use of the school plant." The activities conducted may be recreational, social, civic or cultural in character. Which aspect predominates in a given place depends upon where the local administrators place the emphasis. How often a schoolhouse should be open evenings to constitute it a community center no one can say. The name itself, however, signifies a center of activity, a place at which there is much coming and going, so that the occasions cannot be very infrequent if a center is to justify its name.

Those are the rough outlines of the community center as it exists to-day in the United States. For the sake of brevity and variety it will often be called "school center" in these pages.

### WHY THE HELP OF VOLUNTARY ORGANIZATIONS IS NEEDED

In communities new to the movement, the first steps looking towards the establishment of school centers have generally been taken by voluntary organizations. The reason for this lies in the nature of those steps. (1) The first of these is that of spreading knowledge of the larger service which is obtainable from the school plant. Manifestly this is a task for a private group, since propagandism is a kind of work which the administrators of public school systems are not in a position to do. (2) The next step, in states still uncaptured by the movement, is bringing

about the enactment of a statute giving the local educational authorities the legal right to engage in community center enterprises. This generally involves a state-wide educational campaign as well as dealings with legislators. It is accordingly a task to be performed by unofficial organizations, unless it is assumed by the state education department. And even in that case the assistance of the unofficial organizations will be almost indispensable. (3) After the passage of the law it is still often necessary to persuade the local board of education to undertake the school center work, since it is seldom made mandatory by the legislature. (4) And the most difficult task of all—stirring up such a sentiment among the taxpayers that they are willing to endorse an appropriation for the support of school centers—is obviously one for free, voluntary bodies impelled by devotion to public welfare rather than for those whose energies are necessarily confined to official channels. In a word, the initial activity in the community center movement falls to the voluntary associations because they feel most keenly the needs it is designed to meet and because, unlike official bodies, they are free to follow their own choices.

#### KINDS OF AID VOLUNTARY ASSOCIATIONS CAN RENDER

There are so many phases and stages in school center development that it can make use of the promotive energy of almost every kind of organization in the social welfare field. An organization of state-wide magnitude can help to secure a school center law or a needed amendment of the existing one. This sort of assistance has actually been rendered by various state federations of women's clubs. An association whose field is a municipality can render the following kinds of aid:

1. Conduct a campaign to educate the public regarding community centers.
2. Work for more hospitable and more workable letting regulations in public schools.
3. Secure for community center organizations the privilege of carrying on in school buildings activities yielding an income which can be used in extending and enriching the center programs.
4. Support and direct activities in one or more school centers for the purpose of demonstrating their character and value to the school authorities and the public.



5. Coöperate with school and other municipal departments in the maintenance, operation or direction of community centers.
6. Help to effect coöperative school center administrative arrangements between various municipal departments, *e. g.*, school and park departments.
7. Create and marshal public sentiment in favor of a definite appropriation for school center activities under the direction of the educational authorities.
8. Gather data and information which would be useful in bringing about a reorganization of an existing school center administration.
9. Demonstrate to the school authorities the existence of a public sentiment in favor of adapting old and new school buildings to the requirements of comfortable and appropriate use by adults as well as children.

Identical or similar kinds of assistance have been given to school center movements in various cities throughout the United States by a large number of organizations whose general character is indicated by the following names:

Alumni Association	Playground Association
Associated Charities	Public Education Association
Chamber of Commerce	School Extension Society
(Committee of)	Social Service League
Civic Association	Woman's Club
Home and School League	Woman's Municipal League
Local Council of Women	

A neighborhood or district organization, such as a taxpayers' association, a ward improvement society or a parent-teacher association, can do many things to help a community center movement,—for example:

1. Coöperate with a city-wide organization in some of its efforts to promote school centers.
2. Give publicity locally to the movement through propagandistic meetings.
3. Coöperate with the principal of the school in developing and carrying on extension activities.
4. Help to organize a community center association at the local public school.
5. Maintain and direct a center in the ward school for demonstration purposes.

The phases or parts of school center development just enumerated with reference to state, city, and neighborhood organizations have been arranged in each case in an ascending or progressive series. That does not necessarily mean, however, that in every instance a given step cannot be taken until all of the previous ones have been traversed. As a matter of fact, state, city and ward campaigns for school centers can oftentimes be carried on with mutually reinforcing effects. In many communities at the present time some of the steps in the movement have already been taken, or are in the process of being taken; in none, however, has the final stage of development been completely attained. It is hoped that the list of steps enumerated above may help interested organizations to determine what stage their own community has reached and where, if they are so minded, they can profitably take hold.

The remainder of this pamphlet will be devoted to a more detailed treatment of some of the main phases of the promotive work already outlined.

### PROCURING A STATE LAW

Before framing a school center bill the promoting organization will generally find it advantageous to consult the state department of education or any commission which may have been appointed to revise the education law. Through conferences with these bodies information can be obtained as to how far the existing law is inadequate and precisely what amendments need to be made to legalize the maintenance of school centers. Oftentimes the state department will be willing to stand as sponsor for the bill, especially if it is already contemplating other changes in the school law.

The statutory conditions differ so much in the several states that it is impossible to suggest a model school center law which would be generally available. But this much may be said—an adequate law would contain the following measures:

1. Authorizing the local school directors or boards of education to establish, equip, and maintain school centers on school premises, and providing for the employment of a competent staff.
2. Authorizing local appropriations for the maintenance of school centers.
3. Indicating the method whereby, in case the school board

does not establish school centers, the question of their establishment can be submitted to the electors of the district upon the initiative of a certain minority of the electors. (See provision in the Wisconsin law of 1911, Chapter 27, Section 435e, Paragraphs 1-6.)

4. Prescribing for what purposes and under what conditions schools may be used by individuals and organizations.
5. Authorizing school directors or boards of education to permit voluntary organizations to maintain and operate centers in school buildings.

Over a score of states have now enacted some kind of wider use laws. (For brief digests of those in 17 states see Report of the U. S. Commissioner of Education for year ending June 30, 1914, pp. 470-1.) In putting the above provisions into the phraseology of a bill it will be found helpful to consult the more comprehensive of these enactments. Copies of these laws can be obtained by addressing the respective secretaries of state, the state education departments, or the extension divisions of the state universities. The Department of Recreation of the Russell Sage Foundation also furnishes information upon legislation of this character.

Among the most useful statutes to follow are the New York State social center enactment of April 7, 1913, and the 1911 Wisconsin law above referred to. The latter would be improved by an amendment permitting voluntary organizations to hold income-producing activities in school centers, while the New York law would be more up-to-date without its clauses conditioning the use of school buildings for political purposes upon the results of a referendum. This use has now become too general to require any such restriction. The New York law would be more complete and effective if it included, on the other hand, Wisconsin's provision for a popular referendum upon the question of levying taxes to support community center work.

The methods employed by various organizations in securing educational enactments, as well as an account of a legislative campaign waged by three thousand Michigan women, are described in Elsa Denison's "Helping School Children" (Harpers) on pages 177-201; see also pages 311-320. In case a campaign to inform and arouse public opinion becomes necessary before the enactment of the bill can be attained some of the suggestions contained in the next section may prove useful.

## CREATING PUBLIC SENTIMENT

Every individual converted to the community center cause becomes by example a force in converting others. The more important the convert the more effective and far-reaching is his influence. The fact of a man's conversion does not, however, operate in this way until it reaches the minds of others. Hence the importance of facilitating in every possible way the dispersion of the new facts concerning the progress of the movement. The great modern agency for conveying facts is the newspaper. The promoting organization should have a sub-committee on the press which will see to it that the reporters are furnished with full details concerning every step of the movement. Unless, as sometimes happens, some newspaper makes a special campaign in behalf of the cause, it is important that all the papers be treated alike in giving out stories. In many communities there are writers upon special subjects who will welcome material about the cause for use in their articles. Notes upon the extent of the movement, the varied forms it takes, or some incidents from the lives of delinquents showing the need of wholesome opportunities for recreation,—these are all fodder for the special writer and a little systematic attention to this possibility will often result in some excellent and extensive publicity.

Politicians, whose trade it is to influence men's actions, place great reliance upon oratory, and just as public meetings play an important part in pre-election campaigns, so do they also in the conversion of a community to the school center cause. Public meetings are of value not only because of the immediate effect upon the audience, but because of the publicity which is given to the cause through the newspaper accounts of the occasion. For that reason it is always worth while to see that there are convenient tables and seats for the reporters and that they have in advance typewritten copies of the addresses to be given. When a speaker is brought in from out of town it is well to see that the reporters get to him immediately after his arrival and obtain an interview for use in the papers. If the speaker is advised of the prospective interview beforehand, he will usually be ready to respond.

In extending an invitation to an out-of-town lecturer a full statement of the local conditions should be made, the preferred date or dates should be given, with alternates if possible, and an inquiry made about the expense involved. The cost of getting

such a speaker varies with the distance to be traveled and the conditions under which he works. In practically all cases, traveling expenses and entertainment have to be provided by the local organization. Whether or not an honorarium is required and its amount depend upon the time consumed by the engagement, the number of addresses given, and the circumstances under which the speaker does his work.

A decided interest in social matters is now felt by many religious denominations, and through the local Ministers' Association it should not be difficult to arrange for a Sunday when clergymen throughout the city would preach upon the subject of school centers. Oftentimes the proprietors of local "movies" will coöperate by showing propagandistic slides or films between the pictures on their regular program.

Members of the promoting organization who wish to direct persons uninformed about school centers to sources of information will find the following references useful:

**Educational Extension**, by C. A. Perry, Cleveland Education Survey Reports, 115 pages, price 25 cents, sold by Publication Department, Russell Sage Foundation. A concrete statement of the argument for considering the school center an essential part of an efficiently developed system of public education.

**Social Aspects of Education**, by Irving King, 420 pages, price \$1.60, The Macmillan Company. A source-book showing the school center movement in relation to various other tendencies which are resulting from the modern emphasis upon the social viewpoint in the consideration of school matters.

**The Social Center**, by Edward J. Ward, National Municipal League Series, 337 pages, price \$1.50, D. Appleton & Company. An exposition of the ideal community center in which its importance as an organ of the neighborhood's civic life is stressed.

**Wider Use of the School Plant**, by C. A. Perry (now out of print but to be found in most public libraries). A description of actual school center undertakings, showing how they are carried on and what they mean to society.

**The Extension of Public Education**, by C. A. Perry, Bulletin, 1915, No. 28, United States Bureau of Education. A pamphlet of 67 pages dealing with the present extent and volume of school center activities and treating briefly of their educational character. Copies may be obtained from the Superintendent of

Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C., at a cost of 20 cents each.

It is not often, however, that the ordinary publicity campaign of meetings, newspaper stories and printed matter succeeds in converting a community to a complete, official adoption of the school center plan. Conservative taxpayers will seldom approve the voting of funds for a device before they have seen it work. Accordingly a demonstration of the scheme is usually required and this may consist of a short, intensive effort designed to marshal public opinion at a crisis or of a long term undertaking for the purpose of gradually creating sentiment in favor of the movement. An actual instance of the quick demonstration will now be described.

### THE SHORT DEMONSTRATION

In the spring of 1912 the School Extension Committee of the Bloomfield (New Jersey) Town Improvement Association obtained the use of a large public school on three consecutive Saturday evenings for a social center experiment. A man trained in recreation-center and playground administration was engaged to come over from New York to direct the demonstration. On the first evening the public was not admitted. Only the members of the four groups of volunteer workers who had been secured by the local committee were present, and they had come to receive instruction.

The available accommodations were an assembly hall with fixed desks and seats, a room in the basement used ordinarily as a gymnasium, and a large empty room in the old part of the building which had formerly been the school auditorium. The last room was chosen as the place for the open games, free play, and folk dancing. The assembly hall, it was decided, should be equipped as a place for reading and quiet games, while in the gymnasium room in the basement it was arranged to hold a series of basket-ball games. The expert in charge assigned a volunteer group to each of these three rooms, while to the fourth was delegated the task of maintaining order in the halls, stairways, and classrooms which were not to be used for play purposes.

After showing the assembly-hall committee how to arrange small tables around the sides of the room for dominoes, checkers, chess, parchesi, and similar games, how to distribute the donated magazines upon the desks and instructing them in the degree of

order which it was feasible to maintain, the director took the largest group, composed of ten men and women,—teachers, physicians, business men and women, and housewives,—to the old auditorium, where the most active part of the social center work was to go on. In accordance with his previous instructions, the committee had obtained several dozen bean bags and a number of basket balls. In the course of an hour he taught those staid adults games (see list below) of whose existence they had never dreamed, and in the process they all became young and filled with a new enthusiasm for real play. The basket-ball games downstairs were in the hands of people who were familiar with the game and accordingly needed no instruction. After some final advice regarding the maintenance of order in general the conference closed.

Full accounts of this and a previous meeting when the social center plans had first been formulated appeared in the local newspapers, so that on the following Saturday evening when the school was opened to the public the throngs which came taxed all of the available accommodations. The reading room and the gymnasium each had its devotees, but the larger number were to be found in the big room where the games were going on. A couple of shrill blasts from the director's whistle brought all to a standstill. After the directions had been given for the next game or dance, a signal from the whistle set them going again. The boys were allowed to play for ten minutes while the girls stood near and watched, and then they were brought on and the boys became spectators. In some of the games boys and girls played together.

On the first evening the following games were played in this room: Dodge ball, arch bag ball, straddle ball, center stride ball, box hustle ball, hounds and rabbits, and the folk dances, Danish Greeting and Kinder polka. On the second evening these games were played in the big room: Swedish fox and geese, duck on the rock (using bean bags), black and white, bombardment, shoe race, touch ball relay, and the following dances: Shoemakers' dance, Nixie polka, Chimes of Dunkirk, Mountain march, and Swedish Klapdans.

The members of the board of education were on hand and closely scrutinized the activities and their effect upon the building and its furnishings. Their fears were calmed and the enjoyment of the public completely converted them. When school

opened in the fall they gave permission for a permanent social center in that building.

The longer demonstration may run through a whole season or even for several years. If successfully conducted it usually draws out increasing assistance from the school authorities and that encourages the members of the supporting organization to keep on with the work. The school officials gradually take over more and more of the burden of maintenance until it rests entirely on their shoulders. The demonstrative undertaking merges so gradually into the fully established center that so far as the immediate neighborhood is concerned it constitutes the actual beginning of the permanent work and it will accordingly be so treated in the next section.

Expert service in the conduct of school center demonstrations, surveys and campaigns can be obtained from the Playground and Recreation Association of America (1 Madison Avenue, New York City). Through its staff of field secretaries and trained workers the Association is promoting local recreation developments throughout the country. It publishes *The Playground* (\$2.00 per year, 25 cents per copy), a monthly magazine devoted to play and public recreation, and a large number of pamphlets on all phases of the recreation movement.

#### SCHOOL CENTER BEGINNINGS UNDER VOLUNTARY AUSPICES

In most communities it is not difficult for a voluntary association to obtain the use of a school building for the purpose of trying out a school center plan. It may be necessary to pay for the extra light, heat, and janitor service, but in an increasing number of cities even this expense is being taken care of by the school authorities. How large an enterprise a voluntary association can carry on under these conditions depends upon how much time and energy its members have to put into it and partly also upon whether income-producing activities are permitted. One-night-a-week programs have frequently been successfully maintained by such an association, but of course work as regular and constant as this requires devoted and skilled committees. As the evening occasions grow in frequency and importance a point is soon reached where the volunteer service has to be supplemented or entirely replaced by paid assistance. Since the various lines of activity open to voluntary groups depend so largely upon capacity it will be helpful to classify them upon this basis as a pre-



liminary to the consideration of their opportunities. Accordingly they are here divided into three main classes of associations:

- (A) Without funds but having active working committees.
- (B) With some funds plus working committees.
- (C) With considerable funds for the employment of workers and committees giving mainly advisory service.

The kinds of activities most often attempted by associations of the A class are the following:

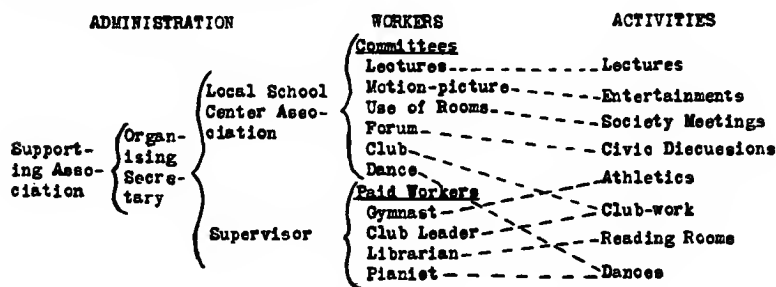
1. General entertainments using amateur talent.
2. Lectures using both local and out-of-town speakers. Professional lecturers are possible if the association is allowed to hold pay entertainments.
3. Holding and chaperoning social dances.
4. Arranging motion picture entertainments.
5. Encouraging amateur musical organizations by furnishing quarters for rehearsals and giving places to these groups upon the programs of the center. In this way popular choruses, string orchestras, brass bands and banjo clubs can be developed and sometimes put upon a permanent basis.
6. Maintain reading and quiet games rooms. The necessary periodicals and games can oftentimes be secured through donations.

Generally not more than one of these lines of activities is carried on at a time and the occasions are usually weekly. Organizations possessing considerable strength and working ability have, however, kept two or three going for long periods and, by using different sets of people, managed to keep the center open two or three nights a week.

An organization of the B class can not only manage several of the activities outlined in the preceding paragraph, but also others requiring trained workers if its funds permit their employment. The activities which require not only specially trained workers but regular and organized service are those particularly for the younger people. These include athletics, active indoor games, and folk-dancing. Club work can be carried on by volunteers, but if many groups are meeting in the building expert supervision will generally be required. The development of clubs is also a task for which special qualifications are necessary. In the case of handicraft, literary, and cultural groups the expense

of the leadership can often be placed upon the group itself, but someone will be required to initiate and organize the undertaking.

An association of the C type can employ an organizing secretary who will develop a local school center organization and at the same time put trained workers in the center capable of conducting juvenile activities. The local association can assist in carrying on the activities mentioned above in connection with the A class while the trained workers can provide the activities mentioned under the associations of class B. Thus a more continuous and richer school center program becomes feasible. The administrative scheme for this sort of enterprise may be made a little clearer by a diagram.



The lines connecting workers and activities indicate the parts of the center's program which the various committees and paid workers will respectively care for. In the case of the club-work the committee will formulate policies, keep on the lookout for new leaders and new groups, organize dramatic or other inter-club contests, and devise club charters. The paid leader will be regularly on hand to assign rooms, maintain order, and substitute for absentee volunteer leaders. The dance committee will attend to the chaperonage, make floor and ticket-office arrangements, determine what persons may attend, and formulate the rules governing the demeanor of the dancers. The paid pianist may furnish the music or coöperate with the auxiliary musicians who may be brought in.

The history of the volunteer promotion of school centers shows of course not only the typical auspices described but many variations of them. The association of the A class, however, is generally a neighborhood or district organization, while those of the B and C classes are of the city-wide type. One of the most necessary conditions for successful voluntary work is the ability

to hold income-producing occasions. The funds thus obtained make it possible to employ trained workers, secure professional talent and set up programs which can effectively compete with the commercial amusement houses. In one place a parent-teacher association put a number of successful business men on a committee charged with the task of holding regular motion picture play entertainments. They managed it just as a board of directors manages a corporation and they made it "go." Social dancing is another form of enterprise that can be made substantially productive under careful and businesslike management.

Voluntary organizations seeking to formulate school center programs will find help in the handbook "Community Center Activities" which is advertised in the back part of this pamphlet.

An organization which is conducting an unusually significant type of school center work is the Community Council of the Harrison Technical High School of Chicago. Under the auspices of this organization, weekly entertainments of a popular and at the same time socially important character are held in the large auditorium of the school. The nature of the work is indicated by the following topics selected at random from past programs:

1. **Community Improvement Night.** Addresses from workingmen's, business men's, and taxpayers' clubs. Address by Lorado Taft on "The City Beautiful." Cello and orchestral music. Folk dancing and amateur dramatics.
2. **Baby Week Celebration.** Talks by doctors and nurses. Motion pictures, music, a playlet, and colored lantern slides.
3. **A Music Festival**, consisting of contributions from the Old World given by Swedish, Norwegian, German, Bohemian, and Polish musical organizations. Program concluded with American patriotic and folk songs sung by the whole audience.
4. **"Live a Little Longer" program.** Addresses by prominent public health officials and a series of motion picture films and lantern slides upon health topics. These numbers were interspersed with vocal and instrumental music as well as a film travelogue.

Details regarding the composition and methods of this organization can be obtained by addressing its secretary at the Harrison Technical High School, Chicago, Illinois.

## FORMS OF COÖPERATION WITH SCHOOL OFFICIALS

Oftentimes the board of education or superintendent of schools will enter into an arrangement with a voluntary organization to carry on jointly a school center enterprise. These combinations of effort have taken various forms, an illustrative list of which is presented below. Since from the nature of the case these were only temporary arrangements and many have since gone out of existence, the names of the places and of the associations have been omitted, but the various instances given all represent actual combinations. The names of the voluntary organizations are set in bold-face type.

1. A **social center league** coöperates with principals and teachers with the indorsement of the board of education.
2. A **school extension committee** furnishes music and supervision for social dances and board of education gives heat, light, and janitor service.
3. A **playground association** provides a supervisor and workers, the board of education contributing the use of buildings and assuming the extra expense of heat, light, and janitor service.
4. A **civic recreation league** raises over \$3000 and employs a director of school centers. The board allows the league to use school rooms on the same nights as the evening schools are held without payment for heat and light.
5. The **social-welfare committee** of the local **chamber of commerce** helps to develop neighborhood civic associations meeting in public schools and assists them in the arrangement of interesting programs for their meetings.
6. A **citizens' committee** upon which the board of education is represented by its president and the superintendent of schools. This body employs a supervisor and conducts activities, using funds provided in part by the board of education.
7. A **city playground association** conducts school and other recreation centers out of funds appropriated in large part by the common council.
8. A committee of the board of education coöperates with the **D. A. R.**, a **fortnightly club**, various **mothers' clubs** and other voluntary organizations in providing a series of entertainments and public lectures at selected schools. The board furnishes the schools without expense and encourages the

principals and teachers to coöperate in the conduct of these occasions.

9. Various philanthropic individuals, a **juvenile protective association**, several **parent-teacher associations**, a **women's aid society**, and a **women's club**, together with the **alumni associations** of several public schools, pool their resources of funds and workers in a coöperative school center undertaking with the board of education, the latter furnishing quarters free of expense and indorsing voluntary coöperation on the part of principals and teachers.
10. A **women's club** through its educational committee develops a "Social Center Council." This body is composed of a member of the board of education, the superintendent of schools, the business director of the board, the volunteer director of the social centers system, and two representatives of each of the component school centers. Each center has its own organization which provides volunteer workers. The board of education gives heat, light, and janitor service, and a liberal amount of equipment.

Sometimes a group of persons interested in promoting community centers can accomplish most by simply placing their services at the disposal of the superintendent of schools. Many of these officials are glad to take the lead in a movement of this sort if they can have the support, moral and otherwise, of a group of influential persons. Such a body can gather information for him, help to influence important members of his board, create public sentiment in support of his plans, and in general serve as a medium between him and the public, championing his proposals and defending him from undeserved criticism. Some of the things they can help a superintendent to do are enumerated in the following section.

#### WHAT A SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS CAN DO TO DEVELOP SCHOOL CENTERS WITHOUT AN APPROPRIATION

A schoolhouse grows into a community center at the same rate as the neighborhood activities, occurring in it, increase in range and frequency. For the superintendent lacking means for school extension but desiring to promote it, the most effective line of action is that of showing a hospitable—even inviting—attitude toward the life outside.

The first step in carrying out the "open door" policy is to

secure from the school board the most liberal and workable set of regulations possible regarding the use of buildings by other bodies. If the appropriations admit it, heat, light, and janitor service may well be afforded without charge for all occasions coming within the range permitted by the regulations. While many boards still require the applicant to meet this expense, there is an increasing tendency to furnish these privileges gratuitously. Having decided that certain occasions of a recreational, social, or civic character advance social welfare, even though they are not educational in the formal sense, these school authorities consider it legitimate to use public funds and public property for these purposes and to encourage such use by not subjecting the applicants to trying ordeals of red tape.

The work of many organizations whose activities are supplementary to those of the schools would be greatly advanced if free meeting-places were afforded in public-school buildings. Among bodies of this character may be mentioned the Boy Scouts, Camp Fire Girls, Girl Scouts, boys' and girls' clubs of all sorts, playground associations, women's clubs, ward improvement associations, neighborhood civic clubs, local art and historical societies, cooking clubs, and the parent-teacher associations.

In a certain New York City center, the Cloak-Makers' Union once held a series of educational discussions. Their program included addresses by college professors, representatives of national government bureaus, economists connected with the Manufacturers' Association, social workers, and representatives of various other labor unions. Similar opportunities are being accorded labor organizations in other cities. Often the only halls available to them are attached to saloons or buildings even more devoid of an atmosphere of cleanliness and order. Deliberations tend to take on the character of the environment in which they are made. The problems which workmen have to face bear a fundamental relation to the welfare of the public, and it can well afford to facilitate the sound solution of them by furnishing dignified and convenient meeting-places. The exchange of views which takes place under free and open discussion tends to modify extreme opinions and to favor balanced action.

Public hearings upon current vital questions should be encouraged wherever school buildings have auditoriums with sufficient accommodations. Ministers' associations are often glad

to organize meetings to discuss such questions as the problem of how and by whom sex education should be provided. The school board which facilitates the discussion of such community matters is performing a real educational service. Sometimes it is possible to get the local associated charities or some other body to establish in the high school a people's forum, a platform, that is, which is intentionally and systematically used for the consideration of vital local questions. The conduct of such a forum requires a leader of the greatest tact and intelligence, but when it is successfully established the solution of social problems is greatly furthered. In some cities committees of the chamber of commerce and board of trade have undertaken the organization of public meetings and discussions in school buildings.

In many cities school buildings are opened for political rallies under partisan auspices without serious criticism on the part of the public. When it becomes apparent that each party has equal privileges respecting such meetings, public sentiment usually offers no objection to holding them on the school premises.

The musical resources of a neighborhood are sometimes considerably increased by affording a meeting-place for a struggling choral society, orchestra, or mandolin club. Loan art exhibits held in the schoolhouse enrich the æsthetic enjoyments of the community, and they can frequently be arranged through a systematic canvass among the families who have interesting pictures, bric-a-brac, and other *objets d'art*. Many times public library boards will establish branches in schoolhouses if there is sufficient encouragement on the part of the school authorities.

The regular arrangement of addresses, concerts, and other entertainments, making use of town talent as well as that of the teaching and student body, can sometimes be placed upon a committee of the board of education. In Cleveland a social-center development of this character was carried on by such a committee for a number of years. Extensive courses of interesting entertainments and meetings were held with no other expense than that of heat, light, and janitor service, and the printing of programs. In every community there is a large amount of latent intellectual and artistic talent which can be called upon for gratuitous public service.

Progressive school work in itself overflows in a number of ways which bring the families and friends of the pupils into the

building after school hours. Such events as basket-ball contests, folk-dancing classes, amateur theatricals organized by the English and history teachers, interscholastic debates, spelling contests, and athletic exhibitions of various kinds are worthy of thoughtful attention. By giving publicity to these affairs, making comfortable provision for spectators, and encouraging the teachers to organize them, such occasions can be increased without detriment to scholarship and in a way that will strengthen the hold of the school upon the community life. Careful and systematic thought regarding the stimulation and organization of mothers' clubs and parent-teacher associations on the part of principals and teachers will also tend to bring to the school system valuable support and coöperation on the part of the general public. A well-organized league of home and school associations makes an excellent foundation for future school center work, as well as for reforms of a purely educational nature.

The Y. M. C. A.\* and Y. W. C. A. have in some cases provided leaders for recreational activities not in their own buildings. Especially where these organizations are carrying on a non-equipment work is it possible to get this kind of assistance. Sometimes social settlement workers will give their services for community center work in the schools. In cities where there is a federation of men's church clubs it might be persuaded to support a recreational expert during a demonstration or experimental period. If no local organization has attempted to organize a movement in favor of school centers, the superintendent himself may well undertake this task, and in promoting it he may find helpful suggestions in some of the pages preceding this section.

#### HELPING THE EDUCATIONAL AUTHORITIES GET AN APPROPRIATION FOR SCHOOL CENTERS

One of the most effective ways of getting people to think seriously about anything is to suggest that they tax themselves for it. If a voluntary association wishes to give the community center movement a real vigorous push in its locality the best thing to do is to ask the people as a whole to decide whether or not they will grant a definite sum of money for the carrying on of

\* For information about the non-equipment work of this organization address Boys' Work Dept., International Committee of Y. M. C. A.'s, 124 E. 28th St., New York City.



school center activities. To the submission of such a proposition school officials cannot object without reflecting upon their attitude as public servants, while the more enterprising ones will welcome it because of the enlargement of their function which may thus result. In addition, such a step automatically secures wide publicity for the idea, uncovers any secret hostility, and strengthens the community's self-esteem as a self-governing body.

In securing a popular expression upon a school center project there are three definite steps:

1. Deciding how large an appropriation to ask for.
2. Getting the board of education to include this item in its tentative annual budget.
3. Getting the item allowed by the common council, board of estimate, or whatever body is charged with the decision upon budgetary requests.

**Determining the Amount.** There is a certain time every year,—in the late spring in many places,—when the members of the school board decide how much money they are going to want for running the schools the next year. Through conversation with the superintendent ascertain exactly when this is, as the period just previous to this decision is practically the only time when this plan can be put through.

The amount to be asked for and the form of request will depend upon the kinds and extent of the activities to be undertaken. In determining these the advice of the superintendent will be most helpful. It may be found that he already cherishes plans for school center activities, and in that case you can save yourself much labor as well as accomplish results with the minimum of friction by getting in behind his plans and letting him take the lead. He will then probably welcome outside suggestions from local leaders and a program of activities can be worked out which will at once receive the community's support. The amount of work which will be practicable will always be less than your ideal, but your aim should include somewhat more than is demonstrably feasible.

While no scheme can be outlined here which will fit the needs of all localities, the three essential points to think about in developing any program may be briefly set down. These embrace provision for (1) the expenses of opening the buildings evenings; (2) salaries of workers, and (3) equipment and supplies. In

computing the expenses under these heads the following considerations may be found suggestive:

(1) The extra expense for coal, electricity or gas and for the overtime service of janitor and engineer incidental to opening schoolhouses during the winter at night is an item which can be easily computed. The cost is generally greater when the whole building is used than when the assembly room alone is opened, and it also varies with different schools. As a rule, however, the board of education can set a figure that will be uniform for all schools, varying only as the whole or a part (usually the auditorium) is used. With that information in hand it will be necessary only to decide which schools shall be opened and how many times each during the season in order to determine how much shall be asked for this purpose. The fundamental question of how much work shall be done is here involved. The answer will be determined by considerations as to what localities need centers most, what buildings have the most favorable accommodations, and what is the largest appropriation that, considering public finances and the political situation, may hopefully be sought. If at all possible it will be well to include provision for meetings of the ward improvement and other associations which have community welfare at heart, as well as for those of parent-teacher societies.

(2) In computing the number of workers count at least one for each room or area which it is planned to use. Singing and dancing classes need two each, that is, one person beside the musician. Skillful club organizers can sometimes run several boys' clubs at the same time, but the best results are obtained when the group is under a competent leader. Young people in the late teens can oftentimes get along fairly well with a bit of guidance only now and then, or if it is a handicraft or improvement class and a trained leader is required, they can usually be persuaded to assess themselves enough dues to meet the expense of the teacher. Capable center directors receive \$4 and \$5 an evening, assistants from \$1.50 to \$2.50, and ordinary helpers \$1.00. The cost of the staff for one evening multiplied by the number of evenings it is proposed to keep the center open will give the salaries item.

(3) Equipment and supplies include such articles as extra chairs, small tables, magazines, phonographs, lanterns, curtains, basket-balls, volley-ball nets, games, etc. The kinds and quan-

tity will depend entirely upon the character and extent of the work to be undertaken. After conversation with a Y. M. C. A. man or a playground director it will generally be possible to fix upon a round sum which will do for a beginning.

**The Tentative Budget.** If the school superintendent has been "in" on all the planning and figuring incidental to determining the amount of the school center appropriation it has been decided to ask for, there will usually be no special difficulty in persuading the board to include your item among their estimates for the coming year. Ordinarily the superintendent will attend to that himself as a matter of course. In any event, practically the only reason which a school committee can allege for refusing to submit the community center item to the higher authorities is that the committee or group promoting it is not backed by sufficient public sentiment to justify them in giving the plan even the tacit support implied in the inclusion of it in their regular requests. That objection you can meet by getting the woman's club, ministers' association or chamber of commerce to endorse the school center idea by resolution, at the same time seeing to it that the action is adequately reported to the general public by the newspapers.

**Getting the School Item Allowed.** The problem is to convince the members of the common council, or whatever body makes up the annual city budget, that the community as a whole, or at any rate a very substantial portion of it, favors the appropriation of public funds for community center purposes. Often this can be accomplished through one or more public hearings, at which arguments in favor of the item are presented by effective speakers, representing important organizations; sometimes, however, the task requires more extensive efforts. Direct communications from taxpayers are the most effective means of moving city officials and their effect is almost directly proportional to the number of the messages sent.

By partitioning the city into districts and placing each under a committee with a well-thought-out plan of action, a very general popular expression can be easily arranged. Through the school children, parent-teacher societies, ward improvement associations, church congregations, and other bodies interested in community welfare, requests to write the city officials regarding the social center appropriation can be widely distributed among the taxpayers. Postal cards, addressed and bearing

alternative expressions of approval and disapproval, ready for the parents' mark and signature, and carried home by interested school children, will generally result in an influential shower upon the city hall.

The easier it is made for people to register their wishes the larger will be the number who do so. If postals cannot be afforded, post cards (postage to be affixed by sender), or even hand-bills stating the arguments and giving explicit directions as to the wording of the message, the person to be addressed, and the ultimate date for mailing, can be used to good advantage. If the campaign is carried on simultaneously in all parts of the city and involves the holding everywhere of neighborhood meetings just previous to the time set for sending in the messages, most effective newspaper publicity will be gained and a very favorable psychological situation be created. There are few communities where, if the people have been made to understand what a school center is, the result of such a referendum will be negative.

When the educational authorities have been allotted definite sums of money for community center activities they will no longer doubt the community's will in the matter. Those who would promote educational extension can do no more effective work than that of helping the school people get that money.

#### ADAPTING EXISTING BUILDINGS

**Assembly hall.** In buildings where no auditorium exists, one may frequently be provided either by erecting an annex or by taking out the partitions between two or more classrooms. Sometimes the permanent wall is replaced by a movable partition. Attics, in buildings where the floor beams are sufficiently strong, may frequently be utilized as assembly rooms or gymnasiums by strengthening or improving the material of the floor. An auditorium should be as near the ground as possible, but one in the top of the building is better than none at all.

Schools already having auditoriums may be further adapted for amateur theatricals by enlarging the platform, putting dressing-rooms at either side, arranging the electric lighting so that it can be controlled from the stage, marking exits with red bulbs, and installing service wires with the proper fuse plugs for the use of stereopticons and motion-picture machines. A fireproof booth conforming to the local fire regulations will be required if motion-picture apparatus is installed. In some halls regular

places for packing the folding seats are provided under the platform, thus permitting activities requiring a cleared floor.

**Gymnasium.** In structures not already provided with play-rooms or other spaces suitable for athletics and similar physical activities a practicable gymnasium can sometimes be obtained in one or the other of the ways outlined above for obtaining an assembly room. In certain cities the same room, by having movable seats and movable gymnastic apparatus, is used both as an auditorium and as a gymnasium. In Milwaukee the auditoriums in the school centers have level wood floors, high platforms, and screened windows and lights, and are equipped with plain wooden chairs bound together in fours by a plank nailed beneath their bottoms, basketball standards and baskets, flame tungsten lights, motion-picture machines and booths, sliding curtains, and accessible dressing rooms. Besides the regular school purposes the rooms serve for indoor baseball and basketball, dancing, motion-picture and dramatic performances, and all sorts of evening occasions.

The basement can be prepared for indoor games ordinarily by simply removing the dust from the floor and safeguarding the windows with wire screens. A good wire to use is "hinge" No. 12 wire with a one-inch mesh. This should be stretched over a wooden frame that is held in place by turn or thumb buckles, making it easy to remove when it is desired to clean the windows. The lights should also be screened. Baskets of No. 12 wire with hinged bottoms can be secured for this purpose at a cost of from \$3.00 to \$4.00. A cement floor in its normal state is suitable for folk dancing, but for social dancing it needs to be covered with waxed canvas or generously sprinkled with cornmeal. Sometimes boracic acid is used for increasing the smoothness of such a floor. It is easily removed afterwards by simply washing the floor.

Inexpensive showers can be installed in a basement by merely attaching faucets and nozzles at regular intervals to water pipes, taking care that there are underground pipes to take away the drainage. Wooden lattice work under the showers will add to the comfort of the bathers, as will also wooden compartments.

When the basement is dry it makes a convenient place for a library room, particularly so if fairly direct access can be had to it from the street. In a number of cities the basements are regularly used for voting purposes, and railings, booths, and ballot-

ing paraphernalia are stored away during the periods when not in use. In some places a number of small, cheap gas stoves have been installed on ordinary wooden kitchen tables, and with the addition of some culinary utensils a very adequate equipment has been provided for cooking classes.

The corridors of a school building when sufficiently wide can often be used for dancing and games. Sometimes the adjoining rooms have moving partitions which can be slid back, thus making a considerable area for use on social occasions. For dancing parties the floors should of course be waxed, but they should not be thus treated when games only are to be played. Sometimes it is thought desirable to set up some kind of railing or fence for the purpose of shutting off the portions of the building which are not to be used for social-center purposes. Whether or not there are gates, some measures should be taken, especially at the beginning of school-center work, to prevent the raiding of classrooms by thoughtless young people.

**Classrooms.** Before attempting to use a classroom, lockers should be provided for the storage of the day-pupils' books and supplies. These lockers may be set up in the corridors or in any other convenient place. By placing drawing boards upon the desk-tops it is possible to use them for sloyd and pierced-brass work, basketry, stenciling, and similar handwork activities. By spreading periodicals and magazines about on the desks, the ordinary classroom serves very well as a reading-room. If scrupulous care is taken to remove all litter from the classroom after its use for center purposes, the friction with the day-teacher and principal will be very materially minimized.

What will increase the usefulness of the classroom for social and recreational occasions more than any other device is its equipment with movable chairs and desks. These are now manufactured by a number of firms whose addresses can be secured by consulting the advertisements currently carried in such educational magazines as *The American School Board Journal* (Milwaukee). The movable desk not only increases the usefulness of the classroom for community-center work, but allows a more elastic and vital administration of the day class work. It is now being used in a large number of schools. If, however, new movable desks are unavailable classrooms can still be made utilizable by putting their present furniture upon strips 1 inch thick by 4 inches wide running parallel with the aisles, thus

making it possible to move the seats in sections out into the hall with little trouble. Sections of four or five seats are thus easily handled.

Supplies of chairs and small wooden tables increase the availability of different parts of the schoolhouse, while social occasions in general will be made much more practicable if there are also a set of dishes and an adequate supply of table ware. In the quiet-games room there should be a traveling box of books from the public library, as well as periodicals suited to the tastes of the prospective patrons of the center.

### PLANNING NEW SCHOOL BUILDINGS FOR COMMUNITY USE

In any movement to raise the building standards of a school system, whether initiated by the board of education or a voluntary association, the first step is to make a careful study of the structures recently erected in other cities. The means for such a study are close at hand. The American School Board Journal (Bruce Publishing Co., Milwaukee) makes the presentation of the plans of new school buildings one of its regular features. Once or twice a year it devotes a special issue to this subject. A large number of the more significant plans which have appeared in its pages have been compiled by the publishers in two books entitled *Grade School Buildings* (price \$3.50) and *High School Buildings* (price \$2.50). The December, 1915, and January, 1916, issues of *The Brickbuilder* (published in Boston, 50 cents a copy) contained an article in two parts upon "The School Building as a Social Center" by Dwight H. Perkins, a Chicago architect who is specially interested in this type of edifice. In this article the author summarizes the recent advances in structures consciously designed for community use and presents a number of exteriors and plans which illustrate the points he makes. A couple of useful publications in this connection issued by the United States Bureau of Education and written by F. B. Dresslar are Bulletin No. 5, 1910, *American Schoolhouses*, and Bulletin No. 12, 1914, *Rural Schoolhouses and Grounds*.

After the promoters of the local movement have themselves become adequately informed regarding the best achievements in this field their next task is to settle upon the type of building that is best for their town. This will necessarily be a compound of their own original ideas and those obtained in their studies; it will further inevitably represent a compromise between what

they would like to have under ideal conditions and what is possible considering the state of the local finances. The process of deciding will be painful but it will have to be undergone. After a type has been settled upon the school architect, or some firm ambitious to serve in that capacity, should be asked to embody it in a set of sketches for use in getting it formally adopted.

If the new type of building involves a larger outlay of public funds than it has been customary to expend, the public will have to be taken into the promoters' confidence. The best methods of doing this are illustrated articles in newspaper supplements and lantern slide talks before representative gatherings. The illustrative material for both of these uses should include not only the plans of the type agreed upon but also those of the more striking and luxurious new buildings in other cities, particularly those of the same class and size. The architects of those plans will usually be willing to lend sketches and perhaps slides because of the advertising thus gained. The most effective way of arousing the average taxpayer is to show him with glaring plainness what superior school accommodations are being afforded in places no larger or more prosperous than his own. And if you can also show him how your plan, through some excellence of arrangement or economy of space, provides better facilities at a smaller cost than those of the rival city you will not have much trouble in obtaining his endorsement. The local chamber of commerce or public education association are bodies which can usually be counted upon to get behind an intelligent movement for improved school structures.

The opponents to any innovation in school building policy usually put forward two kinds of arguments, (1) the extra expense and (2) the interference with the facilities for the primary purpose of the system, the education of children. In answer to the first argument it can generally be shown that while the augmented accommodations will cost more money, that increase will be more than offset by the increased service. It may happen also that a thorough study of the building methods of the school board and the organization of its construction department will show where economies can be made which will offset much of the opposition to the new policy. An interesting comparison of building costs in three large cities is contained in the monograph "School Buildings and Equipment" by Ayres and Ayres (Cleveland Foundation Survey series, price 25 cents, sold by the Publica-



tion Department, Russell Sage Foundation). It was shown that Cleveland is able to erect for less money modern buildings having more special rooms than the two other cities with which comparison was made. A perusal of this report will be found exceedingly helpful in any study of school building policy.

The second argument is convincingly answered in a report (Document No. 1, 1916, Board of Education, New York City) of the Committee on Buildings upon the preliminary sketches for a new school which was designed for operation under the duplicate school plan as well as for use by neighborhood associations. The sketches in it were submitted by Architect C. B. J. Snyder, Superintendent of School Buildings, and they show a 51-unit building designed to accommodate 72 classes and possessing all the facilities necessary for a work, study and play program. Some notion of the wonderful accommodations included in this plan can be obtained from the following list of its special features:

<i>Basement</i>	<i>First Story</i>	<i>Second Story</i>	<i>Third Story</i>
Men's club room	Auditorium	Gymnasium	Roof garden and conservatory
Women's club room	Two dressing rooms	Roof garden	Open-air classrooms
Swimming pool for men and boys	Art gallery and reception room	Music room	Science room
Swimming pool for women and girls	Library	Two kindergartens	Drawing room
Billiard room	Teachers' lunch and work room	Circle room	Home-making room
Bowling alleys	Service room and kitchen	Classrooms	Dressmaking room
Rifle range	Playroom		Classrooms
Laundry	Two shops		
Wardrobe room for pupils at play			

The fourth floor is entirely devoted to classrooms, while the main part of the roof is devoted to a paved playground which is to be screened with wire netting. In submitting the report the Committee on Buildings expressed the view that Mr. Snyder's plans "mark a step far in advance of anything heretofore undertaken in the construction of a public school building, as provision has not only been made for the education of the child, but also for the wider use of the school plant in a way which will not only satisfy the advocates of this particular proposition, but, at the same time, please those among us who are extremely solicitous that the interests of the child be considered first." Later

on in the report the Committee makes this further statement in answer to the oft-repeated fear that yielding to the demands of some particular activity might result in a reduction of the space that should be devoted to regular educational purposes: "It is therefore with pleasure that the Committee has realized that in the plans herewith presented there is no such curtailment, but rather an enlargement of the opportunities for the instruction of our children, and that coupled therewith is full provision for the carrying out of neighborhood activities—something which, it is more and more apparent, will soon be recognized as an essential part of our city life." Despite all the traditions to the contrary, it cannot be too earnestly insisted that there are no wood, brick, iron, or other physical reasons why the same building cannot serve perfectly well for the education of children and the leisure time activities of their parents. Any city that really wants to can erect school buildings of a character which in the margin of the day will serve also as neighborhood clubhouses.

In closing, a few remarks may be made concerning the larger aspects of equipment. The auditorium stage should of course be provided with an apron, footlights, a fire-proof curtain, and sets of scenery, as well as dressing rooms provided with lavatories. It should be possible to control all lights from the stage. If there is a gymnasium or other room in the building affording floor service which can be easily cleared for dancing, the auditorium can have a slanting floor, but otherwise it should be level at least in the central part and furnished with a movable type of seat. A place for storing the movable furniture should be planned for underneath the stage. It is important also that the entrance to the auditorium be equipped with box-office facilities or a portable booth for selling tickets. A few toilets for adults should be accessible near the auditorium entrance as well as a room that can be used for checking wraps. In the treatment of the lobby of the auditorium or the main corridor it is well to adapt the walls for the display of pictures or hanging exhibits, thus giving an art gallery effect.

If an inside playground is provided, it is important to have the lights recessed and protected with wire screens, and the windows as well should be covered with wire screens. The radiators should be recessed or banked behind benches so as to minimize the danger to basket-ball players or those engaged in other active games. In large cities the roof may well be constructed in

such a way as to be available as a playground, and for this purpose it will need to be screened and have a floor surface suitable for activities such as dancing or active games. One of the most important provisions is office space or desk room for the community center director. There should also be lockers and closets for the apparatus used in the evening occasions. If the heat and lighting systems can be so arranged as to permit the cutting off of various floors or units when not in use, the expense of utilizing the building for after-school occasions will be materially reduced. A growing number of cities are equipping their classrooms with movable furniture (see page 26), thus vastly increasing their range of use. Many educators believe that movable desks make it possible for the teacher to arrange a more elastic and vital daily program. An illuminated sign and a bulletin board at the entrance to buildings to be used for community centers are also desirable.

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